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In 1962, in order to improve its Teacher Preparation Program, Texas Southern University administered achievement, self-concept, I.Q., and interest tests in local schools in different types of neighborhoods. It was found that those students in "inner-city schools" scored at or near the bottom of these tests. When the test results were reviewed with teachers, teachers explained them in terms of broken homes, large families, low family income, poorly educated parents, lack of reading materials in the home, etc. To determine whether the reasons given by the teachers were positively related to achievement, a modification of the McGuire and White Social Status Index was administered to the students in the top and bottom 5 percent in overall achievement. A simple correlation revealed no significant differences in variables studied for the high and low achievers. Subsequently, hypotheses regarding the problem of student achievement in "inner-city schools" were formulated, and attempts were made to test them. The results have been incorporated into improving the Teacher Preparation Program. Improvements include (1) recruiting students who have demonstrated some degree of scholastic excellence, (2) designing a number of participation and observation activities for prospective teachers, and (3) structuring these activities to correlate with course content. (SG)

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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR THE INNER-CITY

A Field Report prepared for the Professional Education Seminar

University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

November 7 and 8, 1968

by

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Greetings from Texas Southern University - its staff and its forty-five hundred (4,500) predominantly Negro students. Being located in Houston, in Texas, in the South I am sure that you appreciate the limitations ss imposed on us in terms of program development.

In 1962 in several of our local schools in different type neighborhoods we were permitted to administer some tests - Achievement, Self-Concept, I. Q. Aptitude, and Interest. This permission was granted with the understanding that we would not make the results of the test public without prior approval of the school board. The tests were administered as a part of our effort to ascertain directions for the preparation of teachers. As you might expect, the students in the schools located in those areas which could and should have been classified as deprived scored at or near the bottom. These schools were in what we commonly refer to as 'inner-city schools'.

A part of our task in this work was motivation of the teachers in these schools to do a better job of teaching. Accordingly, we reviewed the test results with the teachers involved and asked for an explanation. Again, as you might imagine, the explanations ran the gamut of excuses for non-teaching. These included broken homes, too many children in the family, not enough family income, poorly educated parents, no reading materials in the home, no father image in the home, et cetra.

As we went further into this task of motivating teachers we took the top and bottom five per cent in overall achievement and ran some further analyses. To test the assumption that the reasons given by teachers for poor academic performance were the ones positively related to achievement we quantified the reasons given by using a modified version of the McGuire and White Social Status Index and ran simple correlations between achievement and the reasons given. To the surprise of the teachers concerned we found: (1) A negative correlation between educational level of parents and academic achievement, (2) A slight positive relationship between occupational level of parents and achievement, (3) An insignificant negative correlation between family income and achievement, (4) A negative correlation, significant at the 5% level, between the amount of reading materials in the home and achievement, (5) An insignificant negative correlation between family composition (living with both parents, living with mother or father, living with grandparents, living with aunt or uncle, living with sister or brother, et cetra) and academic performance, (6) An insignificant negative correlation between the number of siblings in the family and achievement, and (7) that there was no significant differences in the variables studied for the top and bottom achievers. On the basis of the limited data collected we found that the more favorable the variable studied, according to what we in education think, the less likely it was that it would be positively associated with academic performance.

Again, we went to the teachers and reviewed the results and again asked 'why?'. It should not be surprising that, up to this day, the teachers involved have not admitted that the fault was their own.

As a consequence of this we formulated certain hypotheses regarding this problem and proceeded to test them as best we could. Among these

postulates were:

1. Teachers of these kinds of children should be supportive rather than punitive.

2. Teachers of these kinds of children should be accepting rather than rejecting.

3. Teachers of these kinds of children should be imaginative and creative rather than pedantic and conforming.

4. Teachers of these kinds of children should be deeply committed to respecting others rather than imposing values on others.

5. Teachers of these kinds of children should be more concerned with the helping role rather than the institutional role of teachers.

6. Teachers of these kinds of children should be concerned about obtaining and presenting correct information to children rather than covering conventional subject-matter.

7. Teachers of these kinds of children should be able to tolerate, consider, and respond to cultural values other than their own rather than reacting with immediate negation.

8. Teachers of these kinds of children should be committed to the school where they work and be perceptive of its social role rather than be just willing to do only a routine job.

9. Teachers of these kinds of children should be willing to fight for what they believe rather than just willing to accept orders and do as they are told.

10. Teachers of these kinds of children should be self-confident in the role of a professional person rather than be anxiety ridden in the face of problems.

I would imagine that what we postulated then has been very well expressed by Nat Hentoff in Our Children Are Dying as "Involvement." In any event we attempted to test these hypotheses in a number of ways - you are already familiar with most of them. Perhaps the most interesting one we tried was what we called 'Gripe Sessions.' In this one we asked the teachers in the senior high school concerned to select the ten or fifteen most incorrigible children in the school. These names were passed on to us and we got permission from the principal to meet with this group for thirty minutes each week. In these sessions students were free to say what they felt, why they felt it, or anything else they chose to talk about. It was understood that none of the teachers would ever question them as to what they talked about or what we said. These sessions were under the direction of a Clinical

Psychologist and went on for approximately twenty weeks. In the spring of the school year when student elections were held in the school, this group organized themselves into what they called 'the Section Eight Party,' selected a slate of candidates and won the election. Incidentally, one of these students was the first and only Merit Scholar in this particular school.

Since our motive for this activity was the improvement of our teacher preparation program it was only natural that once we established the fact that our assumptions had some validity we raised the question as to how we might incorporate the development of these characteristics among our pre-service teachers into our program. This is where we ran into problems. You know how difficult it is on a college campus to change a practice - we are still trying. However, we are happy to report that several activities have been added to our program. Perhaps this reluctance to change should be blamed on our state rather than on our campus. You see, in Texas, we are told what to do and what not to do - at least that is the way the regulations have been interpreted to us.

What have we done?

First, we have gone all out to recruit for the Teacher Education Program students who have demonstrated some degree of excellence in scholarship.

Secondly, we have designed a number of participation and observation activities to:

1. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate how children grow and develop and how this growth and development relate to learning.

2. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the sociological and anthropological theories as they relate to growth and learning.

3. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the socio-psychological-cultural web which controls growth and learning.

4. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the fact that the sub-culture to which inner-city children have been assigned makes it difficult effectively to improve academic performance.

5. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the fact that among inner-city children the frustrations resulting from cultural conflicts tend to produce early school leavers and poor academic performance.

6. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the fact that the usual instructional design, for middle-class youths, has not been too effective among inner-city children.

7. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the fact that alternatives to the present instructional methods employed in inner-city schools can quite profitably focus on positive changes in self-perception.

8. Help prospective teachers understand and appreciate the fact that what happens to inner-city children once they enter school is largely due to what teachers do and say.

Thirdly, we have highly structured these participation and observation activities so that they are correlated with course content while at the same time insuring that:

1. Students have an opportunity to compare learning styles, teaching styles, classroom management, parent-teacher relationships, community relationships, living styles, attitudes toward school and education, value systems, et cetra in slum school communities, middle-class neighborhood school communities, suburban school communities, innovative school communities, and traditional school communities.

2. Content is relevant.

3. Prospective teachers learn to analyze, criticize all variables observed.

4. Administering and analyzing all kinds of tests.

5. A 'reality shock' is provided for prospective teachers.

6. Analysis of the teaching process is provided.

7. Practice in creating the conditions for teaching and learning.

8. Strategies for maintaining classroom discipline are developed.

9. Interaction skills are developed.

10. Communication skills are developed.

11. Practice in behaviorial analysis of teaching is provided.

12. Skill in organizing for instruction is provided.

Dr. Dreier in his conversation with me asked that this report to you be made in 12 to 18 minutes. This is a rather long time to take to tell you that our experience has been one of frustration - that is what we have been attempting to do. You have been more than kind, thank you for letting us share this time with you.